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JOINT ENDEAVOR TO STIMULATE COMMERCIALIZATION OF SPACE

The first step in a new and innovative program to stimulate the commercialization of space was taken today when NASA and the McDonnell Douglas Astronautics Co., St. Louis, Mo., signed a Joint Endeavor agreement to develop a new technique in materials processing in space.

Under the agreement, McDonnell Douglas and a major pharmaceutical firm will conduct a research and development program to determine the feasibility of separating biological materials in space using a process known as continuous-flow electrophoresis. This process has a high probability of producing substances useful in the diagnosis, treatment, or prevention of human or animal diseases. These substances are currently not being produced in sufficient quantities or purity in ground-based facilities.

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This Joint Endeavor agreement is the first of its kind and represents a new concept NASA has developed to involve the private sector in the definitive stages of a space research program where a technological advancement is needed and there is a potential commercial application. In a Joint Endeavor, NASA and a private firm agree to be responsible for specific portions of the research effort and no funds are transferred between parties.

Upon signing the agreement, Erwin F. Branahl, Vice President/General Manager of McDonnell Douglas Astronautics Co., said: "This agreement will enable private industry to begin the long and difficult task of developing processes that take advantage of the unique environment of space, of finding new ways to develop products that may profoundly affect our daily lives. It is an ambitious program, but one in which we have a great deal of faith."

Dr. Robert A. Frosch, NASA Administrator, cited such joint endeavors as fulfilling the need "to broaden the base of understanding the materials processing in space technology particularly with regard to its usefulness in the private sector where economic benefits may result."

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